

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~striketrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please CANCEL claim 2, AMEND claim 1 and ADD new claims 7-9 in accordance with the following:

1. (Currently Amended) A protective cap for use in association with a wheel support bearing assembly ~~which~~that includes an outer member having an inner peripheral surface formed with raceways, an inner member having an outer peripheral surface formed with raceways in alignment with the raceways in the outer member, rows of rolling elements operatively interposed between the raceways in the outer member and the raceways in the inner member, sealing units for sealing respective open ends of an annular working space delimited between the inner and outer members, and a magnetic encoder provided in one of the sealing units and having an annular surface exposed bare to a radial face of the wheel support bearing assembly, the magnetic encoder having a plurality of alternating magnetic poles arranged in a direction circumferentially thereof, said protective cap comprising:

an annular cover-up portion for enclosing the annular surface of the magnetic encoder that is exposed bare to the radial surface of the wheel support bearing assembly, and

an engagement wall integral with the annular cover-up portion and capable of being removably engaged with an inner peripheral surface of one end of an axial bore of the inner member~~in the wheel support bearing assembly~~, whereby the protective cap is removably mounted on the wheel support bearing assembly.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Original) The protective cap as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the engagement wall is of a cylindrical shape.

4. (Original) The protective cap as claimed in Claim 1, wherein further comprising a center cover-up portion for covering a center portion of an end face of the wheel support bearing assembly.

5. (Withdrawn) The protective cap as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the protective cap is of a ring shape and wherein the engagement wall is removably inserted in a gap delimited between an outer periphery of the encoder and the sealing unit.

6. (Withdrawn) The protective cap as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the inner member of the wheel support bearing assembly includes an inner race and a hub wheel engageable with an inner peripheral surface of the inner race, and wherein the engagement wall is removably engageable with one end of an inner peripheral surface of the hub wheel.

7. (New) A protective cap for use in association with a wheel support bearing assembly that includes inner and outer members with sealing units sealing respective open ends of an annular working space delimited therebetween, rows of rolling members operatively interposed in between the inner and outer members, and a magnetic encoder provided in one of the sealing units and having an annular surface exposed bare to a radial face of the wheel support bearing assembly, said protective cap comprising:

an annular cover-up portion enclosing the exposed annular surface of the magnetic encoder; and

an engagement wall, integral with the annular cover-up portion, and removably engaged with an inner peripheral surface of one end of an axial bore of the inner member.

8. (New) A protective cap for use in association with a wheel support bearing assembly that includes inner and outer members with sealing units sealing respective open ends of an annular working space delimited therebetween, rows of rolling members operatively interposed in between the inner and outer members, and a magnetic encoder provided in one of the sealing units and having an annular surface exposed bare to a radial face of the wheel support bearing assembly, said protective cap comprising:

an annular cover-up portion enclosing and contacting the exposed annular surface of the magnetic encoder; and

an engagement wall, integral with the annular cover-up portion, and removably engaged in the wheel support bearing assembly, whereby the protective cap is removably mounted on the wheel support bearing assembly.

9. (New) A protective cap for use in association with a wheel support bearing assembly that includes rotatable and fixed members, each having a pair of sealing units that collectively seal respective open ends of an annular working space delimited therebetween, rows of rolling members operatively interposed between the rotatable and fixed members, and a magnetic encoder provided in one of the sealing units of the rotatable member and having an annular surface exposed bare to a radial face of the wheel support bearing assembly, said protective cap comprising:

an annular cover-up portion, enclosing the exposed annular surface of the magnetic encoder, and having a distal end thereof contacting an axially outward end of an elastic sealing element of one of the fixed member sealing units; and

an engagement wall, integral with the annular cover-up portion, and removably engaged with the rotatable member, whereby the protective cap is removably mounted on the wheel support bearing assembly.